

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4, 5 and 6 are pending and stand ready for further action on the merits. Support for the amendment to claim 1 can be found at the description of claims 2 and 5; page 5, lines 7-9; page 5, line 29 to page 6, line 6; page 8, lines 15-24; page 9, lines 8-21; page 11, line 27 and Figures 1 and 3 of the present specification. No new matter has been added by way of the above-amendment.

Interview

Applicants note with appreciation that the Examiner conducted an interview with Applicants' representative on May 29, 2003. The Examiner was very helpful in clarifying the outstanding issues. On the Interview Summary Form, the Examiner states:

*OK
May
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The issue under 35 U.S.C. §112, first and second paragraph were discussed and are withdrawn in that claims 1 and 2 are enabling and definite as shown on page 9, last paragraph. Discussed adding the limitation of an in-line printer to claim 1 which will require further searching by the Examiner.

Since the Examiner has withdrawn the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, first and second paragraphs during the interview, Applicants will not further comment thereon.

In the interview, Applicants' representative suggested amending claim 1 to recite an "in-line printer" in the presently claimed method. As the Examiner will note from the above-

amendment to claim 1, claim 1 has been amended in a different fashion as was discussed during the interview. Accordingly, the following comments are respectfully submitted to show the patentable distinctions between the above-amended claim 1 and the cited prior art. We now turn to the prior art based rejection.

Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Brandon et al., U.S. 5,766,389. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

The advantageous effect exhibited by the instantly amended claim 1 is that the sheet member, i.e., continuous member, is prevented from getting wrinkling, widthwise variation and zigzag traveling under conveyance, so that a disposable diaper (absorbent article) of high quality can be manufactured in a stable manner without resulting in a degraded product and troubles on the manufacturing line (cf. page 10, lines 22-25, etc. of the present specification).

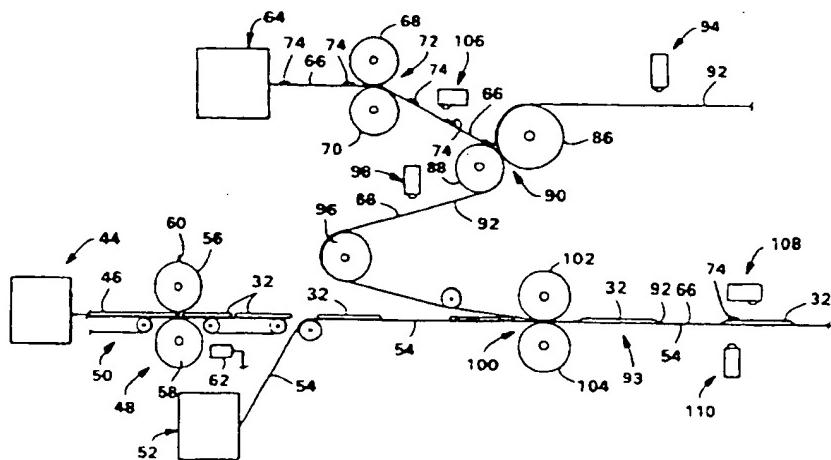
Applicants respectfully submit that the presently claimed method is patentable over Brandon et al. for the following reasons.

Brandon et al. teach a:

process for controllably registering two continuously moving layers of material is provided. One of the layers of material has a plurality of reference marks representing a plurality of separate and distinct components and the other of the continuously moving layers has a respective plurality of different components thereon. The process controls the distance

between reference marks to a selected distance and controllably registers each reference mark to a respective component of the continuously moving second layer. An article is provided in which a graphic is controllably registered within a designated area thereof. (See Abstract).

The following figure shows the apparatus used in the process of Brandon et al.



According to the above figure, there is an extensible layer (66) having reference marks (74) printed thereon which is bound to an absorbent pad (32) followed by a cutting step of the joined members. It is clear from this figure that the absorbent pad (33) is pre-cut prior to contact with the extensible continuously moving layer (66).

This is in distinction to the inventive method which combines the continuous absorbent core forming sheet member (6) with the extensible continuous member (5) which may have a preprinted

figure thereon. It is only after the continuous absorbent core forming sheet member (6) is placed in contact with the extensible continuous member (5) that the absorbent core is cut into separate pieces.

Applicants respectfully submit that the presently claimed invention is patentable over Brandon et al., since Brandon et al. fail to teach or fairly suggest: (1) modifying the process of Figure 5 so that the extensible continuous member (66) containing the preprinted marks (74) is made to contact the absorbent core as a continuous piece prior to the absorbent core having been cut; and (2) the advantages of the present method as described above. As such, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)

On February 21, 2002, Applicants filed an IDS which listed U.S. 4,323,069. It is clear from the attachment to the Office Action mailed February 12, 2003 (paper 10) that the Examiner has considered this document. However, the Examiner has not indicated as such on a PTO-1449 form. Accordingly, Applicants enclose herewith a Supplemental PTO-1449 form listing U.S. 4,323,069. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner initials and signs the enclosed Supplemental PTO-1449 form and encloses it with the next communication.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and comments, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. A notice to such effect is earnestly solicited.

Applicants have attached hereto a marked up version of the claims to show the changes made for the Examiner's convenience.

If the Examiner has any questions concerning this application, he is requested to contact Garth M. Dahlen, Ph.D. (#43,575) at the offices of Birch, Stewart, Kolasch & Birch, LLP.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: (1) Version with Markings to Show Changes Made;
(2) PTO-1449 form



Serial No.: 09/889,847

AMENDMENT WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

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IN THE SPECIFICATION:

The paragraph has been amended as follows:

The paragraph beginning on page 2, line 30 and ending on page 3, line 1 has been amended as follows:

--It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide a method for manufacturing an absorbent article, in which an absorbent article with a predetermined pattern arranged at a predetermined position can be manufactured efficiently, economically and in a stable manner without producing a [an] degraded product.--

The paragraph beginning on page 8, line 25 and ending on page 9, line 2 has been amended as follows:

--Even more specifically, the printing position of the first sheet member 5 fed out from the sheet of rolled form 50 by the feed-out belt 13 is detected by a detecting sensor as the printing position detecting means [B] 10B immediately after the first sheet member 5 is fed out. Between the detecting sensor and the converging part C, it is basically considered that no variation of tension occurs and therefore, the printing position is not offset.

Then, a difference between the printing position detected by the detecting sensor and the machine position detecting by the

detecting sensor as the machine position detecting means 10A is computed at the computing unit 10C. And the speed of the feed-out belt 13 is increased/decreased such that errors are corrected by the differential device 12 at the time of computation of the difference.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 2 and 3 have been cancelled.

Claim 1 has been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A method for continuously manufacturing [an] a plurality of absorbent [article] articles comprising the steps of continuously feeding out a long, extensible, continuous member from a predetermined position and conveying, cutting said continuous member into lengths each equivalent to a length of one sheet of said absorbent article at a predetermined position in a conveying path, and fixedly arranging said cut continuous member at a predetermined position of said absorbent article,

wherein a predetermined pattern is preliminarily printed on said continuous member at a printing pitch shorter than the cutting length of said continuous member, and the speed for feeding out said continuous member is controlled such that the printing pitch of said patterns at cutting can be made coincident with the cutting length of said continuous member by extending

said continuous member in the longitudinal direction, said predetermined pattern is located at a predetermined part of said cut continuous member, said continuous member which is brought into an extended state prior to cut is joined with a continuous absorbent core forming sheet member and optionally at least one other continuous member, and then the joined members are cut altogether, said joined and cut continuous members are arranged together at the predetermined positions of said absorbent article, thereby obtaining the absorbent article in which said predetermined pattern is arranged at each of said [a] predetermined [position] positions.

Claim 6 has been added.